1:Redfield E-5 (1926-1927) 1930
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755 782 [761]

Sometimes *los aires* demand a chicken [*Piden un pollo*]. Then you take a live chicken and tie it by the water tank or wherever the sickness came, and leave it there until it dies. If you ate it yourself you would die.[1]

178 776

Los aires are apparently the extant representatives of some or all of the many specialized deities of disease of the ancient Aztecs. The change they have undergone is that experienced by the European gods that became fairies and goblins. It would seem that the *ahuahque*[2] are also the descendants of pre-Columbian deities;[3] but so far as the present materials go,[4] the

[1] Told by a girl about thirteen years old, a *tonta*. [2] See p. 131.

[3] It seems probable that *los aires* are in part, at least, the *tlaloques*, the minor gods of rain. The doll is probably the twentieth-century manifestation of the dough images offered in propitiation. "Todos los montes eminentes, especialmente donde se arman nublados para llover, imaginaban que eran dioses y a cada uno de ellos hacían su imagen según la idea que tenían de los tales. Tenían también imaginación de que ciertas enfermedades acometían, hacían voto de hacer fiesta y ofrenda a tal o tal monte de quien estaba mas cerca, o con quien tenía mas devoción. También hacían semejante voto aquellos que se veían en algun peligro de ahogarse en el agua de los rios, o de la mar. Las enfermedades porque hacían dichos votos era la gota de las manos, o de las pies o de cualquiera parte del cuerpo, y también el tullimiento de algun miembro, o de todo el cuerpo; también el embaramiento del pezcuezo, o de otra parte o encogimiento de algun miembro, o el pararse yerto. Estos tales a quienes estas enfermedades acontecían, hacían voto de hacer las imagines de los dioses que se siguen: a saber del dios del aire, de la del agua, y del dios de la lluvia . . . ." (Sahagun, Book I, chap. xxi). Sahagun goes on to tell how the afflicted one asked the priest to prepare and offer the image and describes the ceremony then held.

[755] [782]

Probably other ancient gods contribute to the present folk concept. "Estas diosas llamadas Civapipilti eran todas las mugeres que morían del primer parto, a las cuales canonizaban por diosas, según esta escrito en el 6 libro, en el capitulo 28; . . . . estas diosas andan juntas por el aire, y aparecen cuando quieren a los niños y niñas los empecen con enfermedades, como es dandolas mal de perlesía, y entrando en los cuerpos humanos. Decían que andaban en las encrucijadas de los caminos, y por esto les padres y madres vedaban a sus hijos y hijas que en ciertas días del año en que tenían que descendían estas diosas, no saliesen fuera de casa, porque no topasan con ellos, y no les hiciesen algun daño . . . ." (*ibid.*, chap. x).

[4] But see Frances Toor, art., "Cures and Medicine Women," p. 18.

2;Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

The harvesting of corn, like all other operations in agriculture, is done on an individual family basis, with hired help if necessary. There is a minimum of labor exchange and cooperation. Our findings differ from those of Redfield. Redfield writes:

> The men always work in groups; the owner of the field has asked them to help him—it it is *cuatequil*—and then when their fields are ripe he will help them harvest. These are social occasions. Each group has *la muleta*, "the little mule"—a bottle of alcohol hidden under a pile of corn. The preparation of their dinner is also done cooperatively at the house of the owner of the field, and this is a social occasion for the women. They carry the dinner to the fields for the men. The owner of the fields supplies the food and drink. But there the cooperative harvesting ends, for the removal of the grain is done separately in each individual house, each member of the family taking a hand.[10]

This account refers to a type of cooperation which does not now exist in Tepoztlán, and our informants did not remember its having existed in 1926 or even before the Revolution of 1910. Corn is shelled by both men and women. Women generally shell corn by hand in small quantities for daily use in the house and for small-scale trade. Large-scale shelling by the *carga* is generally done by the men who use an *elotero*, which is made of dry corncobs bound together in the form of a flat disc, over which the corn to be shelled is rubbed. Some use the black volcanic rock from the *texcal* for shelling. However, the corn selected for seed is shelled by hand by the men. Women of the two upper barrios of San Pedro and Los Reyes frequently shell corn on a large scale, whereas in the larger, center barrios, large-scale shelling is considered a man's work. In many cases *peones* are hired for this job. The shelled corn is stored in sacks, for the most part, although there are still a few of the old *cuescomatl*. (See Fig. 28.) Many families put the skeleton of a dog's head or a piece of *ocote* wood and lime in the sacks or the *cuescomatl* to protect the corn against spoilage. Formerly when *cuescomatls* were made, the priest would be called to bless them. There is a belief that when a death occurs, the corn in the house or on the house site will be more subject to the ravages of insects.

The loss of stored corn from insects is one of the serious problems faced by Tepoztecans. Many farmers complain that they lose a few *cargas* a year in this fashion. It is rare to find corn that lasts through to August without being seriously damaged by corn worms. Tepoztecans have still received little help with this problem from Mexican agronomists.

An old tradition persists in the village to the effect that the boa constrictor was formerly used to prevent stealing of corn from the cornfields and the granary. It is said that the snake was fed salt and *tequesquite* by the owner of the field, and that thereafter the snake would frighten all strangers by climbing up the cornstalk and making a whistling noise. These snakes were apparently tame and did not harm the owner, but would attack strangers. There seems to have been some

[10] Redfield, *Tepoztlán*, pp. 126-27.

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887 888 To illustrate the range of situations of the aged we have briefly described the manner of living of all the old people in one of the smaller barrios. They are as follows:

[732] MARGARITA C., *age 72, widow for twelve years:* Lives with half-blind bachelor son of thirty-two whom she must support. He is able to carry wood and water and to plant a little corn in the corral. The mother raises pigs and chickens on a small scale and buys up corn and beans which she sells in Cuernavaca. She works very hard and receives no aid from her other children or relatives. One daughter is also a widow and depends upon her sons for support. Another daughter is married, lives in Mexico City, and rarely visits Tepoztlán.

RICARDO C., *age 64, and wife, Petra B., age 69:* Two married sons and one married daughter have families and live in different barrios. All are poor. Ricardo continues to plant his small milpa, and his wife buys local products which she sells in Cuernavaca. She has always done this, even when her children were small, because her husband never earned enough to support them. They receive no help from their children or relatives.

PEDRO F., *age 64, and wife, María C., age 60:* Live with two married sons who support them. Pedro was a charcoal maker until recently but can no longer work so hard. He makes ropes and feed bags of *ixtle*, and his wife works in the kitchen with her daughters-in-law. The sons treat their parents well, and all eat and live equally.

EUSTAQUIA L., *age 69, widow for many years:* Lives with her unmarried son of forty-seven. They are not poor and have no financial problem. She owns some land and a team of oxen which she rents out. She also has some cattle which her son takes care of. The son owns some property too and has money which he earned in the United States, but he works for his mother, and she is the head of the household. He must have her permission before he can sell anything, and he still asks for her permission when he wants to go anywhere, such as Mexico City.

JUANA G., *age 72, widow for eight years:* Has no children, but is in good health and works hard as a laundress and servant. She lives alone in her own house; she has no land but owns two or three *ciruela* trees and raises a few pigs and chickens. Her closest relatives, nephews, live in Mexico City and visit her about once a month, often bringing her clothing. This woman is considered to be unfortunate because she must carry her own wood and water and must depend upon neighbors if she gets ill. But she wears decent clothing and is respected.

[732] JUAN M., *age 72, and wife, María G., age 59:* Live in their own house. They had two children who died. They own no land, and since the husband is lame and ill he cannot work as a peon. They support themselves by making rope and by selling fruit from their garden and twelve *ciruela* trees. The wife takes in laundry occasionally and raises a few chickens. She has no relatives, and the husband never receives any aid from his.

761 Death is viewed as natural and inevitable, and apparently inspires no undue fear or preoccupation. Old people readily speak of death and frequently use the expres-

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sions, "when I am dead," or "when I am underground," in conversation. There is no attempt to protect children from the facts of death. Children of all ages attend wakes, view the corpses, participate in funeral processions and at burials. Little emotion is expressed about death or the dead, although close relatives of the recent dead may shed brief tears if the subject is discussed. Grief is restrained but varies somewhat according to the age and status of the deceased.

The death of an old person or an infant causes relatively little disturbance, that of a parent or adult who is still in full vigor, or of a grown son or daughter, much more so. Reactions to the death of a husband or wife depend upon the quality of the marital relationship but, again, is rarely demonstrative. Suicide is uncommon, and in no case has anyone ever killed himself because of the death of a loved one.

At death, Tepoztecans are concerned with the release of the soul from the body and with its journey to heaven. It is said that under certain circumstances it is difficult for a person to give himself up to death, and the agony of dying is prolonged. Witches and some *curanderos* are said to die "very badly," that is, slowly, losing consciousness and fainting without being able to give up their soul, because they need time to repent all the evil things they have done. Prostitutes also suffer a difficult death, "because they supported themselves with their own bodies. These women see terrible visions and figures which threaten to drag them off, and in their agony they scratch at the bedclothes and at their own faces and hands." Often children "cannot die until they receive a benediction from their parents or godparents." Also a father or mother "cannot die if their children cry too much." In such cases the children are taken away, to hasten death. When death comes, the soul leaves the body and may be seen as a figure, resembling the deceased, leaving the house, and Tepoztecans say, ". . . this is his soul which walks without touching the ground and without showing its face although it wears no hat. It is very white, like foam, and disappears when it touches something."

It is believed that when a person is about to die "his eyes go up and become whitish, his nose sharpens, his hands get cold and still, and his body becomes loose." At these signs, the dying person is taken from the bed and placed on a *petate* on the floor in a corner. He is covered with a sheet, his clothing is removed, and he is dressed in clean clothes. After death he is placed on a table and covered with a sheet, so that "those of little spirit" will not be made ill at the sight of the corpse. A newspaper is spread on the *petate*, and a cross of sand and lime is fashioned on the newspaper.[3] Flowers are placed above the cross, and a candle, which burns day and night for nine days, is placed at the head of the *petate*. If the deceased is a man, his sombrero and huaraches are laid next to the candle; if a woman, her *rebozo* is placed there. The clothing of the dead person is washed and ironed and placed at the head of the *petate*. A *rezandero* is hired by the bereaved family to come to the house to pray twice a day, at noon and in the evening, for nine days. The women of the house are required to be present and to kneel in prayer.

[3] A similar custom is reported for Mitla. See Parsons, *Mitla*, p. 141.